

## HCS HB 873 -- LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

SPONSOR: Helms

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill adds licensed professional counselors to the list of providers eligible for reimbursement under Mo HealthNet for services provided to adults.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say currently one in 10 adults in this state suffers from a mental illness. Unfortunately, there is also a mental health professional shortage in this state. This bill would allow licensed professional counselors who treat adults to be reimbursed by MO HealthNet. The bill does not expand the scope of practice for licensed professional counselors nor does it expand who can receive services under MO HealthNet.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Helms; Dan Holdinghaus, Missouri Mental Health Counseling Association; and Denise Mills, Burrell Behavioral Health.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the original language of the bill was very broad and rather vague. The use of the word "discriminate" could be interpreted to mean that the state could not choose to hire a psychologist over a licensed professional counselor for work that fell within both professions' scope of practice. The Department of Mental Health was particularly concerned that licensed professional counselor would be able to decide whether individuals committed to the department's care should be released back into society. However, everyone agreed that we do need to increase mental health access across the state.

Testifying on the bill were Rick Gowdy, Missouri Department of Mental Health and Chuck Hollister, PhD, Missouri Psychological Association.